REMARKS

Claims 12-21 are all the claims pending in the application. Claim 17 has been amended based on, for example, page 1, second full paragraph; page 5, fourth full paragraph, and page 7, sixth full paragraph of the specification.

Since the amendments place the application in condition for allowance and/or reduce issues for appeal, and contains no new matter, entry is respectfully requested.

I. Response to Rejection of Claims 17-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 17-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Higo et al. (US 2001/0001049) in view of Claessens et al. (2001/0007280) and Fujita et al. (US 2004/0202889).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Claim 17 recites a "Method for producing a very high mechanical strength steel sheet coated with zinc or zinc alloy, comprising the steps of: producing a slab having a chemical composition, in % by weight, consisting of: $0.060\% \leq C \leq 0.250\%$; $0.800\% \leq Mn \leq 0.950\%$; $Si \leq 0.300\%$; $Cr \leq 0.015\%$; $0.100\% \leq Mo \leq 0.500\%$; $0.020\% \leq Al \leq 0.100\%$; $P \leq 0.100\%$; $B \leq 0.010\%$; and $Ti \leq 0.050\%$, the balance being iron and impurities resulting from the production of the slab, the microstructure thereof being constituted by ferrite and martensite, hot-rolling then cold-rolling the slab in order to produce a sheet, heating the sheet at a rate of between 2 and 100°C/s until a holding temperature of between 700 and 900°C is reached, cooling the sheet at a rate of between 2 and 100°C/s until a temperature is reached which is about that of a bath containing molten zinc or a zinc alloy, then coating the sheet with zinc or a zinc alloy by means of immersion in the bath and cooling it to ambient temperature at a cooling rate of between 2 and 100°C/s, wherein the steel is dual-phase; and wherein the steel is used for producing automotive components.

Higo relates to steel that are used for buildings having an improved resistance at high temperatures which allow them to resist a longer time under fire. In addition, in contrast to the steel of claim 17, the steel of Higo does not have a dual-microphase microstructure.

Claessens relates to a steel composition for automotives, which ensures advantageous mechanical features at ambient temperature allowing it a good formability and a good resistance. It is submitted that one of ordinary skill in the art would not have been led to combine Claessens with Higo because the steel of Higo is not the same type as that of Claessens. That is, Higo and Claessens are directed to different technical fields and for solving different technical problems, and thus, one of ordinary skill in the art would not be motivated to combine the non-analogous art with a reasonable expectation of success to arrive at the claimed invention.

Fujita, as acknowledged by the Examiner, does not teach the cooling speed after galvanization, and thus one of ordinary skill in the art would not look to Fujita and combine it with Higo to arrive at the claimed invention.

For at least the foregoing reasons, it is submitted that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has been established and that claim 17 is patentable over the cited art.

In addition, claims 18-20 depend from claim 17, and thus it is respectfully submitted that these claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as claim 17.

In view of the above, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

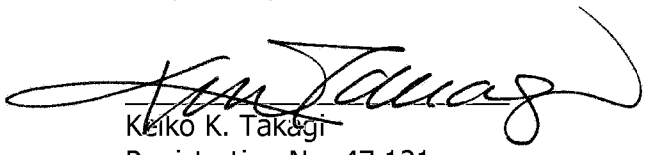
II. Conclusion

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the forgoing rejection is respectfully requested.

If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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